

2-1949

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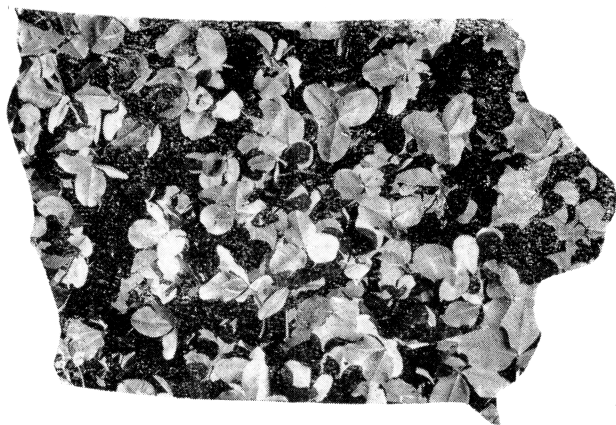


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Recommended Citation

Hughes, H. D. (1949) "Is Ladino For Iowa?," *Iowa Farm Science*: Vol. 3 : No. 8 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/farmscience/vol3/iss8/9>

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IS LADINO FOR IOWA?

by H. D. Hughes

LADINO CLOVER is a giant cousin of the white clover so common in most permanent pastures and in many lawns. Farmers have been asking about it. Is it recommended for Iowa? Where does it grow well—where doesn't it?

Not all parts of Iowa are suited to growing Ladino. That's why we haven't recommended it for general planting. For use in Iowa it is mainly a pasture crop.

Limitations

Because it has a comparatively shallow root system, Ladino suffers whenever there is a lack of moisture or if summer temperatures run unusually high. In most parts of Iowa this condition usually develops sometime during the summer. Ladino must have plenty of moisture. And a fertile soil.

Ladino probably will have its greatest use in the northeast dairy area. Here summer temperatures ordinarily do not run as high as in other parts of the state. And moisture conditions usually are more favorable.

Even as a pasture crop, this legume must be carefully managed. It cannot stand close grazing—should never be grazed closer than 3 or 4 inches. You'll get best results by dividing your pasture and rotating cattle from one pasture to another.

Ladino is a succulent forage. For this reason, it is apt to cause bloat in livestock unless at least 40 percent of your forage mixture is grass.

Ladino is not as winterhardy as most other clovers or alfalfa and may winterkill if conditions are

a bit severe. This is especially true if your pasture is grazed too short in the late summer and fall.

It is not a good legume to use in renovating permanent bluegrass pastures. Such soils are usually low in fertility and tend to dry out badly. These are not the conditions for growing Ladino. Besides this, Ladino does not do very well when grown along with such sod-forming grasses as Kentucky bluegrass. And it cannot endure as much relatively close grazing as can Kentucky bluegrass.

A High Producer

In spite of these limitations Ladino is a high producer. Those farmers who have the soil and moisture conditions which favor it, and who are willing to follow the proper management practices, will find Ladino an excellent pasture crop.

As a plant, it is extremely aggressive, spreading rapidly and often crowding out other vegetation. And the Ladino forage is usually palatable, so that livestock show a high preference for it. Its feed value rates high; and the carrying capacity (livestock per acre) is also high.

Like our common white clover, Ladino has a comparatively shallow root system. The fleshy main stems lie on the surface of the ground, taking root at each node. Leaves and flowers rise from the nodes of the stem-runners to a height of about 10 or 15 inches.

Ladino is one of the earliest legumes to start growing in the spring, and also recovers very quickly after being grazed off. It

is less subject to loss by heaving than alfalfa and other clovers. And it is more tolerant of acid soil conditions than alfalfa, sweetclover or even red clover. It does rather well on poorly drained, hardpan soils.

Although Ladino has a high tolerance for acid soils, it makes its best growth on a sweet soil (plenty of lime). It responds to phosphate fertilizers, and on many soils to the addition of potash. Ladino has been found well suited for some heavy soils that drain slowly, where alfalfa and clovers have a tendency to heave.

How to Seed

For ordinary hay and pasture use, add 1 pound of Ladino seed per acre, or at the most 2 pounds, to your regular clover-grass mixture seeded in oats. You will not get a very heavy stand the first year. But the second year, when the red clover and alfalfa begin to thin out, Ladino usually makes an excellent stand. Since Ladino is hard to cut and cure, only the first year's crop is practical for hay; then pasture your Ladino as it thickens the second year.

Nearly all of our Ladino seed is produced in the Pacific coast region—California, Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Seed production has been very uncertain in the Corn Belt so far.

It is almost impossible to tell the difference between Ladino seed and the seed of ordinary white clover. And since the two plants have similar growth habits, it's very easy to get the seed mixed. For these reasons it seems particularly wise to buy Ladino seed that is certified.